



Louis H. Bruni
County Judge

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WEBB COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRUNI FILES BALANCED BUDGET

In accordance with statutory mandate, and as Chief Budget Officer for Webb County, Judge Louis H. Bruni filed his proposed county budget today which, in spite of the current deficit problems, is balanced according to sound fiscal policy. The proposed budget, with a general fund of forty-nine million, three hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars (\$49,332,000.00), allows for no growth in personnel or wage increases, and includes a reduction in operational expenses.

“This year, we allowed no governmental growth,” stated Judge Bruni, “that means we allowed no increases in personnel and no wage increases for any department county wide.”

In addition to maintaining status quo in terms of personnel, the proposed budget also provides for a 5% decrease in operations for all county departments, and a 20% decrease for Third Party Funding.

“To my knowledge, this is the first time that any proposed Webb County budget reduces operations to any extent,” explained Judge Bruni. Webb County Auditor Leo Flores agreed, “I have never seen a decrease in expenditures for as long as I have been here; to my knowledge, this is a first.” Judge Bruni continued, “After going through our in-house budget

hearings, we were still close to \$2 million dollars short of balancing after maintaining status-quo. So we had to take additional measures, and that meant budget cuts.”

As Judge Bruni explained, his no growth policy in personnel stopped short of cuts in personnel or wage levels.

“We didn’t want to add positions or allow wage increases, but at the same time we wanted to take care of our own. So, we didn’t cut personnel or current wage rates.” The proposed budget did, however, include increases in indigent care. As Judge Bruni explained, “My proposed budget includes increases in indigent healthcare, indigent defense, and indigent burials and autopsies. Collectively, we increased indigent care by upwards of \$400,000 for the up-coming fiscal year. There really was very little to go around.

In spite of the measures taken, preparing the budget was no easy task. “Last year, the prior administration worked with a deficit budget and the plan was to cover it with the fund balance. This year we are not dealing with a deficit budget. This year we are dealing with a balanced budget, and in order to achieve that we decided to leave the fund balance alone so as to provide for contingencies in the future, and, instead of raising revenue projections beyond reasonable allowances for growth, we decided to cut government spending.”

Bruni continued, “By raising revenues projections excessively, the message to the tax payer is that taxpayer has to pay more, so that we, the government, may continue in the style we’ve grown used to. Instead, by cutting government expenditures as I propose, we are telling the tax paying public that we, Webb County government, are going to spend less.” Bruni added that the balance is delicate, and there is little or no room for any changes without upsetting the balance.

Bruni filed the prepared budget with the County Clerk and it is now open for public inspection. The budget process proceeds with a public hearing which is required by law before the adoption of the county budget. This is the only time at which the taxpayers and the general public have the statutory right to be allowed input into the formulation of county policy. Under the Uniform Budget Law, the public hearing should take place on any date after the 15th of the month following the preparation of the budget. The final Budget must be filed by September 30, 2003.

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